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The Harvard Cheating Scandal

The Harvard Cheating Scandal refers to a series of events that unfolded at Harvard University in 2012. It involved approximately 125 students who were investigated for cheating on a take-home final examination for the course Government 1310: "Introduction to Congress". The scandal was significant not only for the number of students involved but also because it called into question the integrity of one of the most prestigious educational institutions in the world. The investigation began when a teaching fellow noticed similarities between several exams during grading. This led to a widespread investigation by the Harvard College Administrative Board, which reviewed all final exams and brought individual cases against nearly half of the students enrolled in the class. The outcome was severe for many students, with "somewhat more than half" being forced to withdraw from the university. The incident sparked a broader discussion about academic honesty, the pressures faced by students at elite institutions, and the nature of collaboration and learning in the digital age. It also highlighted the challenges educators face in creating assessments that accurately measure student learning while discouraging dishonesty. The scandal remains a cautionary tale for educational institutions, students, and faculty about the importance of upholding academic standards and the consequences of failing to do so.